

KERR.



SECOND INTRODUCTORY LECTURE
TO THE STUDENTS OF
THE MANITOBA MEDICAL COLLEGE

SESSION 1884-85.

BY DR. KERR, DEAN OF THE FACULTY.

The utility of the introductory lecture has, I think, fairly been called in question. One lecturer recently informed his audience that he considered the time devoted to introductory lectures could be more profitably occupied in a day's shooting; with that I can hardly agree, as it gives a favorable opportunity for the lecturer to offer some sound advice to the students as to how they should occupy their time at college. The present occasion, at any rate, now that we have regularly inaugurated medical teaching in this country, justifies, I think, a few general remarks on medical education.

I had the opportunity last year, on behalf of the Faculty, of welcoming some of you to the classes of this college. To those of you who appear here for the first time, I wish to repeat that *ced mela falthe*, and to assure you that in speaking for my fellow teachers we wish to extend the same cordial greeting again. While our position towards you must necessarily place us at a certain distance from you, yet we desire you to consider that we are not only anxious to impart that amount of medical knowledge necessary for the future successful exercise of your art, but also desirous for your general welfare; and always ready to afford any advice or assistance that you may require during your continuance as members of our classes. In saying this I know I speak the sincere sentiment of the Faculty, who can so thoroughly sympathize with all your aspirations and hopes, and to whom you can at all times come with the confidence that they are only too anxious to help you in all your troubles and difficulties. To the good student who occupies his time in earnest work, the study of

medicine is attractive, as it is absorbing and inspiring, and apart from the awards of degrees and prizes, well repay every moment devoted to its faithful study.

Whatever have been the influences that have decided you in adopting the career of medicine, it is best you should thus early comprehend what you assume in entering the profession. I hope none of you have started with the idea of becoming rich; if you have, I am afraid I must tell you that you may be mistaken. For the acquisition of wealth there are other and more prolific paths where riches can be gathered with much less effort and more productive results. If ambitious of social or political eminence, you must know that the life of even the most successful of us offers few inducements; or do you aspire to those positions of prominence that are sometimes awarded by a grateful country or a generous Sovereign, you must thus early understand that it is seldom such royal favors are bestowed on the members of our profession. These are reserved for those who distinguish themselves in the perhaps more ennobling pursuit of commerce or politics, where such titular distinctions may do more honor to the Regal or Viceregal donors. No, it must be admitted that, compared with the other professions, or with commercial life, in the matter of substantial recompense for life-long labor, we cannot anticipate those rewards that usually follow success in these latter pursuits. Yet while we rarely acquire more than a competence of this world's goods, and still rarer that we may be honored by social or titular distinction, yet can we not claim other rewards equally desirable? Ours is not only an art—it is a science; and as cultivated practitioners you take rank and merit not only the distinction of belonging to the scientific world, but it also offers opportunities of acquiring honors and fame in the pursuit of original research.

The study of the first year's student lays bare to him the great problems of life and death, and leads him at once to that mysterious bourne that limits the material world. It is to the student of medicine that is reserved the exclusive privilege among men of studying the structure and functions of the human economy, that complex organism a knowledge of which alone implies a large amount of scientific attainments.

Let me say something now of that fitness that the medical student should possess to be enabled profitably to pursue his studies. The necessary knowledge of anatomy, physiology, materia medica, botany and chemistry require that he should be provided with a good sound preliminary education, not only that

he may comprehend fully his lectures and text books to which he must apply for a knowledge of even these elementary subjects, but also that his mind may be trained to habits of study.

Whatever may be my individual opinion of the character of the entrance examination which the University of Manitoba requires of the students of medicine to whom it proposes to grant its degree of M. D., I am convinced at any rate that if the standard is too high it is an error in the right direction, and I know that those of you who take the time to prepare for and pass it, will never regret having done so, but will live to thank those who compelled you to acquire such a good general education as that matriculation demands. In the respect of general education, the medical profession is somewhat different from the other learned professions—and you must not forget that you now aspire to a learned profession—in that there is but very limited opportunities afterwards that you will be able to spare from your ordinary professional duties, to improve your mind or extend your scientific knowledge beyond what time you must devote to current medical literature, which latter is necessary in order that you may keep abreast of your times and occupy a proper position among your confreres in the medical world. To be sure a number of our members have accomplished brilliant results in the collateral sciences, besides keeping up in the other requirements of the cultivated practitioner, but it is rarely that we find the medical man shining in any other sphere outside of his own.

We must remember that the science of medicine is eminently progressive—none other more so. In order, therefore, that those who propose to join its ranks may hope to take a respectable stand among their fellows, and be able to guard well its interests with the outside world, there should be no doubt of their possessing a sound and liberal education. Let me assure you then, that to be an educated gentleman, as well as a well qualified medical man, is a *sine qua non* of success. In all the higher branches of practice, believe me, there is no possibility of permanent success in any branch of regular practice without the practitioner possesses a certain educational accomplishment. It is therefore essential that students of medicine should be well prepared, not only for after practice, but for that mental wrestle they are undertaking in studying medicine. This mental training that such a course of studies can only give, makes your career through college correspondingly easy. In this as in other matters where the advice of your teachers can be of value, it is manifestly their duty to inculcate the lessons resulting from that experience, and in this

particular I know I speak the experience of every one of your teachers who have already been over the ground you are now traversing, and who being actuated by the warmest interests for your success in your career, desire that you should come prepared with a good stock of general information, not only that you may be able successfully to cope with the business of life, but especially that your minds by this preliminary culture may be trained to correct habits of thought and observation. Ordinary intelligence will not suffice without mental training. The medical student, as well as the practitioner, requires to generalize from a series of observations mentally recorded in order to be able to come to correct conclusions. This is only possible to the educated mind. From the lack of that power of generalization the uneducated man must rely only on isolated facts, and this mistake we see constantly being committed by members of the profession who have not had those advantages that I am now urging. Nor can any faculty of memory, no matter how well it can store facts, compensate for this power of generalization, which is the key to the successful study and observation of disease as it is in its application to the relief of afflicted humanity, which is the ultimate aim of our art.

Having said this much on the general educational qualifications of the student before he enters, I now wish to give you some hints as to how you should direct your energies after you have entered.

The object you have in becoming students of medicine is not merely to pass examinations—you have to become legally qualified. The law requires of you that you should be legally competent to take charge of the lives of your fellow-citizens, and considering the very extended curriculums that these qualifications embrace, it behoves you now on the very threshold of your studies, to take into serious contemplation how they can best arrange to occupy that short space of time allotted to you to accomplish this object. Above all, do not attempt too much in your first year. You must understand that there is little to be gained by merely listening to lectures. To profit by your lectures you must keep abreast of them by your studies at home, and to do moderate justice to the four preliminary subjects of your first year—anatomy, physiology, *materia medica* and chemistry—will require diligent work and a systematic arrangement of the hours of study.

I certainly recommend to every first year man also to take out his perpetual ticket at the hospital, so that he can thus early

familiarize himself with disease, and acquire encouragement for his studies, by observing their application either at the bedside or in the extern. You can at any rate cultivate the faculty of observation and become familiar with many of the manifestations of disease and accident. In your study of anatomy, I would recommend you to confine your efforts at first to the bones, muscles and ligaments, before proceeding to the more advanced branches of the subject, and above all be your own demonstrators. It is only by dissections, and dissections of a certain character, that anatomy *can* be learned. Whatever you dissect, do it carefully, minutely and well. One part well dissected is of more value to you than the whole subject hurriedly and imperfectly studied. In physiology you must *first* acquire a knowledge of the structure of the different tissues, the nature and property of food, and all about the complex process of digestion; the blood, its component parts, its functions and maintenance. In chemistry, attempt only the non-metalic elements—heat, light and electricity. In *materia medica*, familiarize yourself with the appearance, composition and modes of administration of drugs only. The application of these drugs to the cure of disease, you will with more profit acquire a knowledge of later on.

Now, I wish to say a word in reference to the number of classes you should take. For the first year's students these four subjects are sufficient, with perhaps botany for those who have not already passed it in their matriculation. I am quite satisfied that no good can come of crowding more lectures into this year, certainly none of the *final subjects*. These subjects form the framework on which you will build your medical knowledge, and the success of the structure too much depends on this framework to jeopardize its stability by hurried or imperfect workmanship, or by trying to finish the edifice by putting on the roof before the walls are up. You cannot have the importance of the thoroughness with which you should study these subjects too much impressed on your minds now. Without a perfect knowledge of these subjects—and, if I may particularize, I would emphasize especially anatomy and physiology—you can neither be successful competitors for degrees at college or skillful practitioners after you leave college.

To the second year men, let me warn you also against taking too many classes. Four or five of them at the utmost is as many as you can faithfully attend. Do not be in too great a hurry to get through your classes. Remember that the day will come when these facilities for study and observation will not be avail-

able, and you will regret not having taken more time and paid more attention to the classes and clinics.

Now, as to the method of studies. Successful study must have a method. I took occasion to warn you last year against spasmodic and irregular habits in study. Be methodical, of all things. Never allow a day to pass without its allotted quota of work. As I said before, you can profit but little by listening to lectures if you do not read up the subject at your lodgings, and allow no single day to pass without at least two or three hours' careful perusal of the subject lectured on through the day. Whatever amount of time you devote to reading, let it be regular and systematized, and if I may give my own experience in the matter of home studies, you will accomplish much more and with less effort if you select the early hours of the morning in preference to late hours at night for this work. Not only is the receptivity of the mind for fresh facts at its best after the refreshing effects of a night's sleep, but the mental exercise in the morning brightens and strengthens the intellectual faculties for the rest of the day.

It is the intention in this college not only to use as largely as possible *demonstrations* in every department of teaching, but also by this means to test at the examinations the student's knowledge of his subject in this practical way. Thus you see how necessary it will be in your studies to grasp in an intelligible, practical way facts as they are brought before you, by carefully noting them at the time, and assist your memory to record them for further reference. You as well as we enjoy the great advantage of the experience of our predecessors in medical teaching, and you will find the list of subjects taught, the text books and the general means of acquiring a practical as well as a theoretical knowledge, the same here as elsewhere. Successful teaching far less depends on the teacher than on the student. At the most your teachers are but your guides to the knowledge you must acquire by your own industry and steady application. I warn you now that the fullest requirements will be exacted of you at your examinations. If we have assumed the responsibility of teaching it was not without due deliberation and with the full determination to qualify well up to the standard. In this we your teachers and you our students are mutually concerned. The success mostly depends on you. The amount of proficiency you exhibit in your examinations and in practice afterwards, all depends on how the next four years are spent. Those of you who come here for the first time I am indeed glad to be able to refer you to the conduct

of your predecessors last year, and can confidently predict both at the examining board and later among your brethren in practice the most satisfactory results, by pursuing throughout the full term of your studies those same regular, industrious and sober habits that characterized your seniors last year and which will, I feel confident, be characteristic of them throughout. Ever with the defects and imperfections that must accompany all new undertakings of this sort and especially when I know that we individually are determined to compensate further defects with a more than ordinary devotion, to your interest, I can have no hesitation in asserting, that with such a class as enjoyed the privilege last year of the opening medical studies in Manitoba, that taken the full term of their studies as completed and continuing as they have begun they shall do credit indeed to our young college.

Our intention is of course to send our students before our own university and among the many eulogies paid to that institution I hope that not the least will be the future character of her graduates in medicine and surgery. Do not let us forget for a moment that our *very dearest interests* depend on the standing of our examinations and the character of you our future graduates, not only as to your qualification as skillful and accomplished practitioners, but also in another particular to which I wish to allude before closing, and that is your character as *gentlemen*. From whatever social ranks you may have come and with whatever advantages you may possess or may lack, remember you have now joined the ranks of a profession, the members of which are always supposed to bear the stamp of gentlemen in their bearing and conduct before the world. Next to possessing a thorough and practical knowledge of medicine, there will be no other fact which will influence your success and prosperity more than this.

Remember you are reaping the rich heritage of centuries of

patience research left you by a long line of honored names who have devoted their lives to placing scientific medicine where it is to-day, and your responsibilities are correspondingly great. But I do not believe you require any great urging to work. I know sufficient of your earnestness to feel assured that you only require to know *how* to work to accomplish every result attainable by an industrious college training. It is only *how* you should work that I wish especially to speak. I have said you must be methodical, have a daily system, your own daily time table and do not depend too much on the mere act of memory for acquiring your subject. Depend upon it, if you have nothing to hang your me-

mory on, you will drop your facts almost as you gather them; whereas if you have a method in your work, and seek illustrations that you may have clear perceptions at the time of what you are studying you cannot fail to record them permanently. Remember "nothing is really learned that is not understood." In this way you can become careful observers and be able to reason accurately, which I look upon as the ultimate object of successful study. I fear in speaking thus to you that I may impress you with the idea that your college course will be one of "all work and no play"—mere drudgery in fact. Far from it. With a systematic method of employing your time, you will find your work anything but drudgery.

I have spoken of the fascinations of physiology, anatomy, and the ever-absorbing prospects as you progress in your discoveries of the fresh attractions and allurements of your art, and then look at the reward. Is not your profession honored above all others? Are you not to become the trusted and confidential friend of your fellowman, in such close and intimate sympathy with him that your opportunities of gaining his affection and gratitude are constant and are often fully appreciated. Your calling will be to relieve suffering, succouring with the potent agency of your art the helpless and afflicted; rescuing often lives threatened with prolonged suffering, perhaps death to comfort health and strength. In cheering words and encouraging expressions, you will in your every day duties have opportunities of lightening the gloom that surrounds the sick and dying. There is no other position in life where the gratitude and affection of the heart of his fellows is so often earned or more freely awarded. Gentlemen, I will now conclude by wishing, on behalf of the Faculty and myself, a successful and prosperous session.